

## **The Binational Alliance**

**and**

### **Higher Education Teaching, Learning and Researching in the Cross-border Niagara Region**

#### Essential Background

Nearly three years ago leadership at Medaille College (R. Jurasek) began conversations with leadership at the Binational Tourism Alliance (A. White). This dialogue was anchored in a TV talk show appearance about binational cooperation that included White, Jurasek and Erie County Executive Collins. The animating questions for White and Jurasek were: What sort of collaboration might produce mutual benefits for higher education on both sides of the border? How could the Binational Tourism Alliance help answer that question?

Those questions were taken to leadership in the Western New York Consortium of Colleges and Universities but at that time there was no consortial interest in meeting with the Alliance. Jurasek and White decided to plumb the interest in further exploration of the questions by convening a meeting held at Brock University in fall, 2010 (Medaille, D'Youville, Brock, Niagara College, NCCC, Niagara University and BTA). That meeting in fall, 2010, led to a larger meeting of presidents or presidents' designees in mid-winter, 2011.

The goal of the president-level discussion held at D'Youville College on 1 Feb 2011, (Medaille, D'Youville, Brock, Niagara College, NCCC, ECCC, Niagara University, ECIDA, BTA, Cdn Consulate) identified a number of promising areas for future and ongoing collaboration. The following list does not capture every single opportunity and is rather an overview of what seems useful and achievable right now. Rather than offer a running list of activities it is organized around familiar international assumptions about the higher education domains that matter most to academic institutions and their communities. The three domains are teaching, learning and researching.

What might Niagara Region Higher ED Collaborative be and do? How might the Binational Alliance help?

#### Teaching

- The Collaborative could facilitate faculty interaction in order to create/refine course content focused in the economic, political, cultural, environmental realities of the Niagara region.
- The Collaborative could facilitate outreach at the respective campuses that instructs and enlightens our stakeholder communities about issues and life in the Niagara region.
- The Collaborative could extract teaching and learning value by supporting and shaping event planning for the bi-centennial commemoration of the War of 1812.

### Researching

- The Collaborative could inventory and share research capabilities (e.g. labs and materials).
- The Collaborative could sponsor pursuit of joint funding and IP possibilities.
- The Collaborative could encourage and underwrite faculty and student research on social, economic and political phenomena in a cross-border region such as ours.
- The Collaborative could support/expand the scale of Conferencing/Reporting done by undergraduate and graduate researchers at existing venues (e.g. the Research Conference now jointly supported by UB and Brock).

### Learning

- The Collaboration's member campuses could pool their internship opportunities and make them available and doable cross-border.
- The Collaboration could encourage and support interaction by student organizations at member campuses.

### What next?

- A core team of, say, four presidents could choose one or more of the above opportunities and immediately seek to implement or pilot.
- The core team would model a more formal collaborative structure for discussion purposes at a future presidents' meeting.
- The core team would apprise the leadership of the Western New York Colleges Connection about the emerging thinking by the Niagara Region Higher ED Collaborative (a 21-member higher education organization that is taking on the hallmarks of an effective pan-institutional collaborative entity).
- The core team would work closely with the Binational Alliance because the Alliance is a likely partner to leverage the positive effects of such a collaboration with other cross-border public and private sector partners and projects.
- The core team would also work with the Canadian Consulate which may have initial but modest funding for first steps.
- The core team would present its proposal(s) at a future meeting of the presidents in attendance (and those who were not such as ECC, UB, Buffalo State University).

- At that future meeting the presidents would decide what projects in what sort of collaborative structure might be pursued.

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Notes submitted by Rick Jurasek, Medaille College, 28 Feb 2011